



## Prescribed Burning

### **What is it?**

- Prescribed burning involves the use of controlled fire as a management tool to maintain and enhance grassland and woodland habitats.

### **Why is prescribed burning done?**

- Reduces the amount of dead and dying plant materials that hinder plant growth
- Recycles nutrients from old plant growth for use by growing plants.
- Promotes germination, growth, and flowering of native plants.
- Increases the diversity of native plant life.
- Controls encroachment of woody brush and trees into grasslands, including invasive species such as multiflora rose.

### **Who conducts prescribed burns?**

- Conservation biologists, wildlife managers, restoration ecologists, landowners and volunteers.
- Non-profit organizations (*e.g.*, The Prairie Enthusiasts.), state agencies (*e.g.*, WI DNR), and federal agencies (*e.g.*, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service).

### **How is prescribed burning done?**

- Practitioners develop a burn plan in advance that addresses where the burns will be completed, the types of fire breaks used, weather conditions under which the burn will be conducted, and the number of people and types of equipment needed to safely complete the burn.
- They use special tools to light the fire (drip-torch) and control the fire (fire swatters, backpack water pumps, ATVs and trucks with water tanks, pumps and hose/nozzle).
- Federal fire-fighter training is required for all state and federal employees who conduct prescribed burns, and is also often taken by non-profit volunteers and landowners.
- Practitioners prepare fire breaks in advance by mowing, disking, or raking/blowing around the periphery of the burn unit. This enables containment of the fire to a predefined area.
- Practitioners utilize various ignition strategies to control their fire, such as 'back burns' (burning into the wind) and 'flanking burns' (burning at a 90-degree angle to the wind).
- Safety is the #1 concern! Safety equipment includes flame-retardant clothing, hardhats and eye protection.

### **When is burning done?**

- Burning is conducted in the spring after snow melt or in the fall after leaf fall.
- Sites are typically burned on a 3 – 5 year interval.
- Burning is completed when weather conditions are favorable. Practitioners check the temperature, wind speed/direction and humidity on-site before a burn, and utilize other resources such as NOAA weather forecasts to determine when conditions are favorable.

**The Military Ridge Prairie Heritage Area** is a cooperative project of 9 partner groups representing the private, state and federal sectors. Goals of the partnership include: 1) Provide and maintain viable prairie, savanna, grassland, and aquatic habitat, for the many plants and animals that depend on these habitats for their survival; 2) Maintain an economically viable rural and agricultural landscape; 3) Provide and encourage traditional recreational opportunities which are compatible with the conservation goals; and 4) Integrate best applied science through the use of continued monitoring and adaptive management. For more information, contact Katie Abbott, Project Coordinator, at (608)935-2791 ext. 134, or at [katie.abbott@rcdnet.net](mailto:katie.abbott@rcdnet.net).